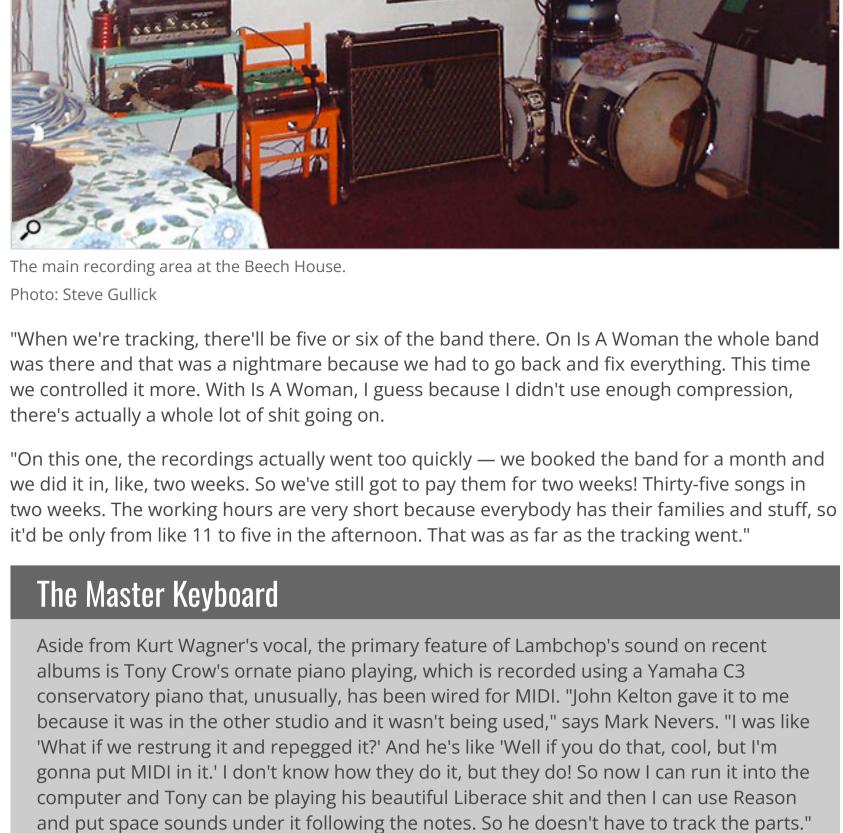


own house.

Q

Nudiomovers

NUDIOMOVERS



Kurt Wagner's distinctive baritone vocal is usually recorded using what Nevers calls the 'dark'

compressor in the world. But it has the Over Easy function on it where you can squash the shit

If the basic track-laying was relatively painless, then it was followed by what Nevers describes as "aeons of hell overdubbing". This included all of the elaborate string parts that adorn the

songs, which were arranged by Lloyd Barry ("a great old soul guy") and played by the Nashville

ways. The dude that did all the great Motown shit, he just put two mics up, but he had a great

room. If you don't have a great room, you have to close-mic it, then create it. What I do is I

Neumann U87. "People always say 'How do you get that vocal sound?' It's funny because I learned this trick from my country music days, which is just using the Dbx 160, the cheapest

out of it, but you don't hear it. So with Kurt, I've got it going through the Sphere and we're

adding high-end and the 160 is squashing it, but you can't hear it.

String Machine. Nevers has nothing but utter respect for these musicians, particularly since the band were still tweaking the arrangements even as the parts were actually going down. "These Nashville cats are so awesome," he enthuses, "and they don't have a problem, they can just play it. We used a 10-piece — six violins, two violas, two cellos — and then we doubled it. I tend to use Neumanns, it's back to 87s and then 47s for the cellos. I record strings two different

have 3D with digital.

boggling."

Awesome Cats

close-mic them and then I put them far away, so when I do the different passes, I can do far away or close." The Joy Of Analogue One recurrent feature of Nevers' recordings is their warm, spacious sound, a factor he

puts down to the combination of the Beech House's Sphere desk and JH16 reel-to-reel multitrack. He recalls the moment he finally matched the two together as being a defining moment in the history of the studio. "I already had the tape machine but when I put it together with the desk, it was like they'd been lost forever. It was like 'Oh my God, this is the way they're supposed to be.' You can just put a 57 in front of anything, and the shittiest mic through that preamp to that tape machine sounds a lot better than a 47 through Pro Tools. Because back then they cared about sound instead of convenience." As you may gather, Nevers is a firm analogue fan, even if he uses Pro Tools for editing and mixing. "Pro Tools is such a great editing machine, but when digital first came out, its big thing was that there was no tape hiss. But if that was the reason to get rid of analogue, then analogue — if you do it right, like, on 16-track with proper tape — is as

quiet as digital, so that excuse is no longer there. And you have the 3D and you'll never

carrying tape around and lining up machines and using old shit. I still use Pro Tools, but it's after the fact. They've got it to the point where it's not as piercing, but it's never gonna have the imagery, it's never gonna have the depth. You put on a Todd Rundgren record or an Elton John record from the '70s and you can hear right into it. Then you listen to the

On the digital side, Nevers runs Pro Tools on an Apple G4 using OS 9.2, though he prefers

to use the Apogee converters from his two Mitsubishi 850 32-track digital machines

("They're crunchy, more rock & roll, they actually have a life to them"). Everything,

"I feel kinda like a fish out of water, 'cause the way I make records is very hard. It's

modern shit and it's just right in your face, there's nothing behind it."

eventually, ends up on the Pro Tools rig. "At one time I was locking two 16-tracks up," he explains, "but it's such a pain and it's gonna end up on a CD anyway. So what I started doing is I record everything originally to 16-track. I take that and I dump it into Pro Tools and then I dump the stuff I need back onto 16-track for slaves and then overdub on that." In terms of mics, Nevers says that everything is very much geared around what sounds good with the Sphere. "Because of the impedance, there's different mics that sound like crap on modern-day consoles, but on the Sphere they sound amazing. Like the dark 87

recording analogue, so later on when you're mixing, you turn it back the other way and it gets rid of the hiss. "I use a lot of 87s and then on guitars I still use 57s 'cause they're great and they've got the punch. I'm very primitive on that, I don't have a lot of fancy mics and the newest and the best. Basically it's the tape machine and the preamps. Last thing I'd want to do is spend \$10,000 on a new Neumann. I mean, John got the Sphere for \$3000 and I spent

another couple of thousand dollars getting it working, so the thought of buying one

microphone or one GML preamp for the cost of that whole console is just mind-

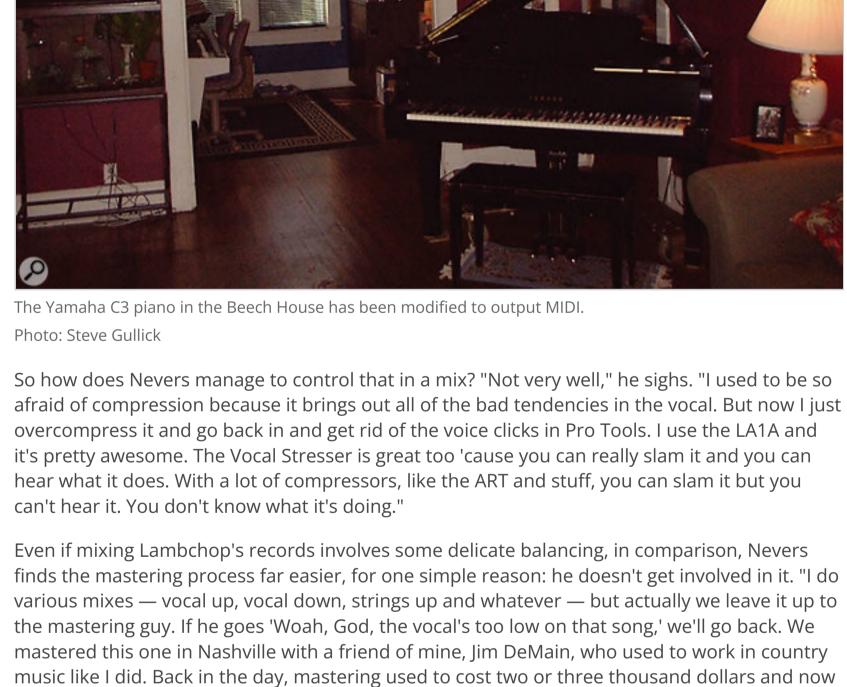
from the mid-'80s, it's just amazing. The trick that my partner John Kelton taught me

about the Sphere is that you turn up the 12kHz all the way, so it's too bright, but you're

A Mixing Challenge Mixing for Aw C'Mon/No You C'Mon was done in the Beech House's sister studio, John Kelton's SSL room Wedgetone, and lasted a month, which isn't bad going since the finished product features 24 songs. Nevers says his biggest problem was balancing the orchestral arrangements with Wagner's vocals. "That's when it became hard because he was singing real quiet and also there's this huge orchestra. It's like 'How do you get him above the orchestra?' But like John Kelton says, 'If he's a star, turn his vocal up, don't worry about it.' It does come down to, if you've got someone who can sing, that's all you're listening to really. I wish I could've spent

more time mixing, but usually it's a day a song. The ones that have the percussion and the giant

strings and stuff, with him barely singing, even just a little variance of his volume is too much."



"My deal is that I try to take it as far as I can, but if I give it to somebody, then I want it to be different. I don't want to hear the same thing. And sometimes it'll piss me off, if it's overcompressed or whatever and I tell him to back off. But at least I know he's doing something. I don't like getting a record back the same way it sounded, unless I was really happy with it. Which is never." Chances are that the producer's refusal to attend mastering sessions comes from having his wrists slapped by mastering engineers in the past. "When I first started getting into putting out records, I was really into phase. And mastering engineers would always be going 'Oh, you're

they can do it for a thousand and be better. The technology's gotten cheaper and also he's got

cook dinner and the phase makes it come out from everywhere. But when I need something for radio, I need to mix it for radio. Like I just had to go back and remix 'Something's Going On' for Lambchop and I had to get rid of all the wide stuff." **Girl Power**

It's clear that Mark Nevers is proud of his idiosyncratic, homespun working methods, and

rightly so, when the results are so impressive. "That's my life," he laughs. "I spend all of my time

Additionally, anyone considering using the Beech House for a future project should be aware of

making us sick.' But I don't sit down and listen to records, I walk around, I smoke cigarettes, I

one important fact. At some point in the afternoon, Nevers' daughters arrive back home from school, and if they don't like what you're doing, they'll let you know. In this respect, it seems, they certainly take after their father... "Lily and Iris, my daughters, are very straightforward," he grins, with barely disguised pride. "Kurt can take it, a lot of artists can't. They'll be like 'Quit playing that stupid song over and over again.' So if you've got an ego and you can't have a kid

Wonks (>)

trying to keep old crap working!"

his experience now.

tell you that your song is boring, then don't come over to the Beech House!" Next article 💽 Previous article GIVEAWAY

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